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# Chlamydia

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Chlamydia is a very common sexually transmitted disease (STD). It is also one of the most serious. It is caused by bacteria (germs) passed from one person to another during sex or from mother to baby during birth. It should be treated at once.

If it is not treated, both men and women risk becoming sterile. The tiny tubes of the reproductive system can become scarred and blocked as the body fights this infection.

## What Are the Signs?

Usually **none**. If they occur at all, they begin 1 to 3 weeks after having sex with a person who has the disease.

Most people who have the disease **have no signs**. Some men may have a very slight discharge from the penis or a burning feeling while urinating. Women with this disease may have a little more vaginal discharge than usual or very slight bleeding at times when this is not normal. A burning feeling when urinating, abdominal pain, or a low fever are other signs. Half of the men and 70% of the women with chlamydia **don't know they have this STD**.

## Is There a Test?

Yes. A sample of genital cells is collected using a small swab. This is sent to a lab. Not all doctors do the test. Be sure to ask for one. The test can be done even when there are no signs of chlamydia.

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## What Happens If I Don't Get Treated?

Untreated chlamydia is a major cause of **pelvic inflammatory disease (PID)** in women. The germs go deeper into the body with each new infection, damaging the reproductive system.

Epididymitis, an inflammation near the testicles, can be caused by chlamydia. This begins suddenly with fever, pain, and swelling. Like PID in women, damage can be severe.

NGU (**nongonococcal urethritis**) means that the tube (urethra) which carries urine from the body is inflamed with bacteria other than gonorrhea. Chlamydia is a major cause of NGU in men.

Proctitis, an inflammation of the rectum, can be caused by chlamydia. Often it is not noticed until pain, discharge or bleeding occurs.

Babies can get eye, ear and lung infections from mothers with chlamydia.

## How Can I Prevent This STD?

Remember, you will get chlamydia again unless every one of your sex partners is treated and cured.

Birth control pills do not prevent chlamydia and other STDs. Birth control **and** condoms must be used for protection. Learn the right way to use condoms. Use them with all partners every time you have sex.

Douches and enemas can wash chlamydia and other germs deeper into the body. Don't use them without checking with your doctor.

## Where Can I Learn More?

If you have any questions call your doctor, local health department, family planning or community clinic.

Or call the National STD hotline at **1-800-227-8922**.

If you need this publication in an alternative format, please call 1-800-525-0127.



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